

National Leaders Learn from Oklahoma Handheld Project

Washington, D.C. – Congressman Ernest Istook (R-OK) and Oklahoma State School Superintendent Sandy Garrett today welcomed U.S. Assistant Secretary of Education for Technology Susan Patrick to Oklahoma to see first-hand the success of Oklahoma schools using handheld computers.

“Oklahoma has taken the lead in using this technology,” said Istook who invited Patrick to the conference. **“Now we are sharing our success with the rest of the country.”**

The Assistant Secretary’s visit was part of a one-day conference hosted by SRI International in conjunction with the Oklahoma State Department of Education highlighting the Oklahoma PALS (Palm Access = Learning Success) program. With over 5,000 students participating, Oklahoma boasts the largest educational deployment of handheld computers in the country.

“We are pleased to find that, once again, Oklahoma is a national leader in using technology to enhance teaching and learning,” Garrett said, referencing the state's recent #2 national ranking in classroom Internet connectivity. **“Oklahoma educators are maximizing the use of technology to keep students engaged in learning while using resources from around the world and leveraging limited funds available for advanced and specialty programs.”**

In 2001, Congressman Istook and Superintendent Garrett initiated the PALS program after Istook led a team of Oklahoma school leaders on a trip to a smaller educational deployment of hand-held computers in a school district near Chicago. Over the past 3 years, Istook has secured nearly \$2 million in federal grants to fund the Oklahoma pilot program, making it the largest in the country.

“The potential use for this technology is so enormous that it can’t be overstated,” said Istook. **“It’s the quickest and least expensive way to put computers in the hands of every single student. It means students better prepared for high-paying work, businesses attracted to a place on the cutting edge of technology, and an improved standard of living for all.”**

The grants Istook secured also included funds for researchers from Oklahoma State University to measure the effectiveness of unlimited one-on-one computer access in raising test scores and improving student attitudes toward learning as well as funds for training teachers on how to incorporate handheld computers into their curriculum.

Today’s conference brought together the knowledge of local school leaders with national research leaders to examine the future of this new technology. Participants heard research results, viewed student and researcher demonstrations, and discussed promising future uses of handheld technology.

Attendees and participants included representatives from the University of Michigan, the University of Texas, the University of Massachusetts, Vanderbilt University, Texas Instruments, PalmOne, the U.S. Department of Education, the U.S. Department of Commerce, and other companies and educational institutions interested in the future of educational use of handheld computers.